The Relationship Between E-service Quality Components and E-loyalty of Thai Consumers Toward Online Travel Service Websites
ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างองค์ประกอบของคุณภาพการบริการของสื่อออนไลน์กับความจงรักภักดีในการใช้สื่อออนไลน์ของผู้ใช้บริการชาวไทยที่มีต่อเว็บไซต์ที่ให้บริการด้านการท่องเที่ยว

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Abstract

This study proposed to analyze the e-service quality components which consist of web design, reliability, responsiveness, privacy, and web customization were influence and significantly related to e-loyalty of Thai consumers toward online travel service websites. The conceptual framework is presented and developed on the exploratory research which conducted to work on the e-service quality of online travel agent. The questionnaire used to collect the data of 406 respondents were returned. And the data were analyzed using

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Pearson correlation model. The result of this study showed the significant relationship between e-service quality and e-loyalty of Thai travels toward online travel service website and each e-service quality components has positive relationship with e-loyalty.

Keywords: E-service Quality, E-loyalty, Online Travel Service

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อนำเสนอบทวิเคราะห์ถึงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างองค์ประกอบของคุณภาพการบริการของสื่อออนไลน์ และความจงรักภักดีในการใช้สื่อออนไลน์ของผู้ใช้บริการชาวไทยที่มีต่อการใช้บริการเว็บไซด์ด้านการท่องเที่ยว ซึ่งประกอบด้วยองค์ประกอบของคุณภาพในด้านการออกแบบเว็บไซด์ ความน่าเชื่อถือ การตอบสนอง ความปลอดภัย/ความเป็นส่วนตัว และความทันสมัยของเว็บไซด์ ซึ่งแบบจำลองในการศึกษาได้รับการพัฒนาและศึกษาจากการทบทวนบทวิจัยที่มีความเกี่ยวข้องกับคุณภาพการบริการของสื่อออนไลน์ และการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเชิงประจักษ์จากแบบสอบถามจำนวน 406 ชุด จากนักท่องเที่ยวชาวไทยผู้ซึ่งใช้บริการเว็บไซด์ด้านการท่องเที่ยว และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยแบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้าง โดยการศึกษาครั้งนี้ทำให้ทราบถึงความสัมพันธ์ที่มีนัยสำคัญขององค์ประกอบของคุณภาพการบริการของสื่อออนไลน์ และความจงรักภักดีในการใช้สื่อออนไลน์ และยังสามารถนำผลการวิจัยมาศึกษาเพิ่มเติมในองค์ประกอบแต่ละด้าน เพื่อพัฒนาเว็บไซด์ด้านการท่องเที่ยวต่อไป

คำสำคัญ : คุณภาพการบริการของสื่อออนไลน์ ความจงรักภักดีในการใช้สื่อออนไลน์ การให้บริการด้านการท่องเที่ยวออนไลน์

Introduction

Internet had gradually come to play a major role in the world as it was an advance technological tool provided several benefits to human being. According to Li and Suomi (2009), with the rapid development of information and communication technology, Internet and World Wide Web have become important tools in business, which has a major impact on business world.

Internet has changed many business industry, also has significantly revolutionized travel industry in the last decade. Rami et al (2017) stated that social media and website are the common tools for e-marketing in tourism agencies, the cost minimization and time saving are the most important advantages for e-marketing. The Internet, as a universal and interactive communication tool, has resulted in great changes of customer's attitude and behavior. Consumers enabled to conduct travel information searching and travel service booking online. They gradually shifted from the traditional offline channels to online channels.

John et al (2016) claims that the internet has exploded with a plethora of online site that directly sell travel and tourism service and products to consumers. With the increase of online travel service and the advantage of travel site option which contain useful travel information, tourism can easier to price compare between different online travel agents.

In addition, online travel service delivery generally helps travel service providers to establish direct promotion to target potential customers and send them tailor-made information at the appropriate time. Schreiber (2016) indicated that online Travel Booking is convenient, saves time, and allows an easy and quick comparison of prices for all three segments include Package Holidays, Hotels, and Vacation Rentals which take a significant share from today's offline booking volume.

In Thailand, the revenue in the online travel booking segment amounts to US$ 2,000 million in 2018 and the revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate of 12.7%, resulting in a market volume of US$ 3,636 million by 2023. Also, the online travel service market growth rate was predicted to be approximate 19% each year until year 2021, thus in 2021, the online travel service market would be expected to generate at least $2.21 billion revenue in Thailand (Statista, 2018).

In online environment, the term of e-service quality has been found to be an important input to customer satisfaction, which quality is strongly related to customer satisfaction, retention and loyalty. It is expected to be a determinant of success not only in a traditional environment, but also in an online environment (Ghada, 2016). Consumers are able to search travel information through websites, to engage in the subsequent decision-making process, and to purchase travel services without leaving home. Customers are likely to use resources if they are easily accessible (Ayeh et al., 2013).

The change of consumers' behavior, travel service providers have been implemented online travel service distribution to customers. With the online loyalty has parallels with the concept of loyalty to an establishment, in the sense that loyalty to a customer online behavior toward an electronic business which purchase and repeated visit to the website (Rami et al, 2017) and continuous relationship between the customer and a brand (Ltifi and Jamel-Eddine, 2012).

This study focuses on e-service quality components which consist of web design, reliability, responsiveness, privacy and web customization have significant relationship with

e-loyalty in online travel service website by studying Thai travelers who used online travel service website.

Objective

The main purposes of this study is to analyze the relationship between e-service quality components and e-loyalty of Thai consumers toward online travel service websites.

Literature Review

Overview of online travel service industry

Roji et al (2014), E-Marketing known as electronic marketing applies marketing technologies and principles via the internet. It involves all the activities an enterprise presents through the World Wide Web in order to attract new customer and business and retain them. In addition, Electronic commerce (e-commerce) has expanded rapidly over the past five years and is predicted to continue at this rate (Networksolution, 2014). It helps the business to create the communication route with their customers to take feedback, suggestion, complaints, and questions or to provide the information of business, promotion, discounts or activities. As tourists from all over the world use the web and track details of fascinating and convenient hotel destinations, it is necessary for the hospitality industry to maintain strong online presence (Roji et al, 2014).

With the spread development of the internet and information technology, there were increasing number of tourists to use the internet for finding and searching information about tourism which the total number of users in online travel booking is expected to increase amount to 6.3 million in 2018 to 9.7 million in 2023 (Statista, 2018) Hence, company that has not implemented the technology is likely losing its competitive potential to win customers' hearts (Vladimirov, 2012).

In the early stage of Internet market, several online travel service companies had competed with traditional travel service companies by providing service with lower prices (Li and Suomi, 2009). However with an increasing number of travel companies participating in the Internet market, the initial price advantages in online travel service has nullified, and low price has become a minimum qualification to compete in the Internet market (Sohn and Tadisina, 2008). Thus, travel business operators operating in the Internet market including hotel service providers need to find new things to attract customers to their online service.

Ghada (2016) stated that electronic service (e-service) can be strongly associated with online customer satisfaction, and as a consequence with a website's ability to satisfy online customer's needs, and e-service quality is important for two reasons: firstly it greatly influences customers' satisfaction and intention to shop online, secondly it is critical in attracting potential customers (Noarati, 2008). Meanwhile the expand of online travel service which increase the competitors in service industry and this occasion customer loyalty become one of the key element to rapid growth for the company. Godwin et al (2010) described customer loyalty as repeat purchases; the number of time the customer buys the same product or service from the same seller or provider under the same category. In the long run loyal customer will tend to buy more products and be less demanding of the company (Saeed et al, 2012).

Although several companies have realized the importance of online travel service to customers, they seem not to understand customer's perception of online travel service and how customers assess their online travel service quality. And despite many studies concerning traditional service quality, relatively few studies have been conducted in the Internet market, and even less on online travel service quality (Li and Suomi, 2009). This paper as a result proposed to analyze the relationship between e-service quality components and e-loyalty of Thai consumers toward online travel service websites. This paper would begin with the background of online travel service industry, online travel service in Thailand, review of e-service quality and e-loyalty, followed by the presentation of conceptual framework, hypothesis, methodology, result, and end with conclusion.

An increasing number of people to access online shopping and it is becoming a well-accepted way to purchase a variety of products and services (Bijal and Prahant, 2013). As the travel industry is largely information-driven and online competition for the travel consumer progresses among travel and tourism service providers, consumers benefit by having a broader view of travel products and services available for purchase, and the ability to compare products (John et al., 2016).

Schreiber (2016), the Online Travel Booking market is divided into three service categories as mentioned earlier: Package Holidays, Hotels, and Vacation Rentals. One of the tool to support growing of online travel service delivered to consumers is application belonging to travel booking on smartphone. Travel booking applications offer flexibility and convenience.

A major advantage of this kind of applications is when it came to last-minute bookings. When being on a holiday trip, these travel applications help users to quickly find a hotel on the go for the next night. Hence, smartphone penetration has a major impact on sales. Furthermore, the rise in smartphone penetration has resulted in travel booking services becoming more sought-after. The use of smartphones among all demographics to gather travel information and to utilize social networks throughout their trip continues to increase (Vinod, 2011).

Yuxin (2018) stated that the increasing of online travel user which internet has provide information and service to consumer, as a result, online tourism has also witnessed a great increase and gave rise to many online travel agencies. More and more travel service providers has been conducting travel service distribution online without dependence on traditional intermediaries of travel agencies and without commissions paid to travel agents. Customers' switch from offline channels to online channels is related to their perceptions on online channels. On customer perspective, online travel service delivery offers them more benefits compared to traditional offline channels. The convenience that customer can easy to access, enjoy when buying travel-related products and services online, save time and energy for customer were the most common motivations for customers to attracting online travel service (Yuxin, 2018).

Online channels dramatically reduced customer's searching effort on travel information, including both searching time and searching costs. In addition, online channels offered customers with more information to support their decision based on their comparison of different travel products and prices.

All these activities, including conventional travel service providers is more dependent on face-to-face relationships with customer to gain customer satisfaction, its ability to deliver high-quality, timely, and in-depth travel information and convenient price-quality comparisons using customized search processes (Wai-Ching and Christina, 2012).

However, Gupta et al. (2004) further stated that online travel service booking did not have the same appeal for travelers, despite numerous travel service providers have made effort to implement online direct sales to customers. Customers might have difficulties with online booking involving the significant complexity of travel service, for example: , multiple destinations, international travel, travel involving mixed air carrier arrangements and so on, and channel risks to switch to online travel service delivery was also an obstacle for customers to adopt online channels in travel service distribution (Gupta et al, 2004).

Trend of online travel market

The global online travel market is expecting stellar 12% CAGR during the forecast period (2017-2023), and the market can reach a valuation of USD 12 billion during this time. Asia-Pacific possesses the highest growth potential in the online travel market share, India and China being the most lucrative markets (Digitaljournal, 2018).

Chetan and Maggie (2018) stated that online travel agencies represent the fastest-growing online distribution channel in Asia Pacific (APAC), with aggregate gross bookings projected to climb 68% from 2017 to 2021.

In U.S. travel agency market is forecast to reach US$ 127 billion by 2021, up from $112.8 billion in 2017. Driving this growth are air, cruise and specialized sales – and customers who are ready to pay someone to take care of their travel needs (Phocuswright, 2018).

In Thailand, the online travel market has been increasingly grown year by year due to the increasing number of Thai travelers especially in new generation age (25 – 35 years old) who turn to use online travel service channel rather than traditional channel because of the increasing rate of smartphone users as well as the growth of Internet market. According to Schreiber (2016), the major online travel service operators were Priceline, Booking.com, Expedia, and Travelloga, which offer wide variety range of service related to travel reservation: airline reservation, hotel reservation, cruise reservation, and car rental. Those operators continually improved their service to meet the requirement and to offer most convenient to all customers such as provide price comparison, offer credit card payment, and offer multiple reservation segments. In addition to those operators, there are some large operators provide specific service such as hotel reservation include Agoda and hotel.com, which were popular among the travelers worldwide also.

E-service

An e-service defined by the European judiciary that e-service is a service or resource on the Internet, which was set up to improve communication between citizens and business (European Justice, 2015). With Internet-based systems and mobile solutions are the service delivered online system to provided products and service to customer. Electronic service or e-service are an umbrella concept for services in different areas utilizing information and communication technologies, most prominently the Internet. (Ahmed and Christian, 2018). Taherdoost (2014) mentioned that an e-service is an activity of interactive service, which

relates between customer and supplier through an electronic channel. And e-service from the technology experts' viewpoint, is a transaction that customer search for products and service information and purchase for desired goods and service, and the enterprise is responsible for delivering on time (Wai-Ching and Christina, 2012). Chun Hai (2007) argues that e-service are services on the Internet where it is possible to make a purchase and sale transaction, unlike traditional websites, where only have descriptive information available. Similar Anna et al (2018) stated that delivering high quality e-services is a key strategy to achieve competitive advantage, due to its positive correlation with the increase of customer purchasing decisions.

The available definition on one main idea – researcher define e-service as interactive activities between customer and service enterprise through channels of service delivery such as internet or mobile phone, it will create transaction services for handling online orders, and convenient with timely, price comparison, in-depth goods and service information and final decision making.

<u>E-Service quality</u>

As the increasing of e-service adoption in business field, the importance of measuring and monitoring e-service quality in the virtual world has been recognized, and e-service quality simply became the interesting topic to concern worldwide.

However, much of the studies in e-service quality take a combination of traditional service quality dimensions and web interface quality dimensions as the starting point (Li et Al, 2009). Hongxiu et al. (2009) examined e-service quality dimensions in the Internet market focusing on online travel service, which comprises nine dimensions; Ease of use, Website design, Reliability, System availability, Privacy, Responsiveness, Empathy, Experience and Trust. In addition, Yuxin (2018) conducted a research work on the service quality of online travel agents and online travel service providers with the resulted showed that information content, safety, website structure and usability were the key dimensions of e-service quality for online travel agents. And currently, the e-service quality becomes an important criterion to measure the websites and there are many researchers have developed key of e-service quality dimension to measure the consumer or user's perception of quality (Li et al, 2009).

In this paper, five e-service quality dimensions would be proposed based on the study of previous literatures as follows:

1) Web Design: Web design has been identified as a key factor for the acceptance and success of the websites and electronic commerce (Carlos et al, 2009) and Renee et al (2016) indicated that a well-designed website with high usability has been found to positively influence visitor retention and purchasing behavior. With the web design elements could be classified as a symbol, color, layout, language and content, moreover it influences on users and online consumers' perceptions and behavior with addressed to simplicity and freedom of navigation provides clear, timely and accurate information in all its contents and as appearance that calls for the users' attention (Carlos et al, 2009).

2) Reliability: Reliability is described as the capability of carrying out the said task or service dependably, consistently and accurately (Saeed et al, 2012). It was the capability to perform the promised service accurately and consistently, which it could be including the frequency of website update, prompt reply to customer enquiries, also the accuracy of online purchasing and billing. Reliability is the most important dimension of e-service quality, as it is vital to make customers to trust that the company is going to perform what it promises to do (Li et al, 2009).

3) Privacy/Security: The privacy could be describes the level of information protection from a threat and personal information can be secure. Customers worry about when conducting business online are privacy/security, especially regarding their confidential personal information (Saeed et al, 2012). Ahmed and Christian (2018) claimed that the technological transformation in providing e-services has also led to a drastic increase of attacks and fraudulent activities by cyber criminals, which e-service produce as estimated loss of US$600 billion in 2017. Hence, the privacy/security has been a critical matter in the development of e-service and the enhanced feeling of security will result in improved perception of quality (Hamed, 2017).

4) Responsiveness: Responsiveness is defined as the timing and speed of delivered service which includes actual time of transaction with customer when the administration promptly to solve any problem in interactive processing (Saeed et al, 2012). It is necessary for website having immediate and effective respond for any problems and any delay might cause to loss customer (Mu et al, 2015). Responsiveness was effective handling of problems and returns via the Internet. Company's prompt service to customers via the Internet could

make customers feel more comfortable during purchasing and continue purchasing without interruption (Li et al, 2009).

5) Web Customization: This variable become more importance and is a particular part of online service quality. The web customization is definitely the newest branding strategy as it plays an important role in increasing efficiency, ensures maximum optimization of resources at hand, and cutting down unwarranted wastage in the website (Saeed et al, 2012). The web customization related to web design as providing more desirable feature to the customer with uses fine art and graphics for superior, eye-catching design that engages the user. It is an important element when it comes to managing service technology on the Internet (Terezia et al, 2015).

E-Loyalty

Naser et al (2014) defined e-loyalty as the willingness to observe and to revisit a website or to make a transaction in the future, also Izyan et al (2014) agreed that e-loyalty as a customer commitment toward an electronic business resulting in repeating shopping behavior. That e-loyalty is create when the business manage to consistently deliver on its promises, which the result shows of repeat purchasing or accessing behavior reflecting a conscious to continue buying the same thing or repeating visit the familiarity website (Honglei et al, 2014). With e-loyalty is conceived as a positive and future disposition by the consumer to make a new online purchase on the same website, or to recommend it to other consumers (Goncalves et al, 2016). Currently, the increase of e-commerce and online travel service website, the creation and maintenance of customer loyalty in online markets have become important in the business (Duygu and Ahmet, 2018). Curtis et al. (2011) also noted that e-loyalty had an impact on repurchase intention and successful business.

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis
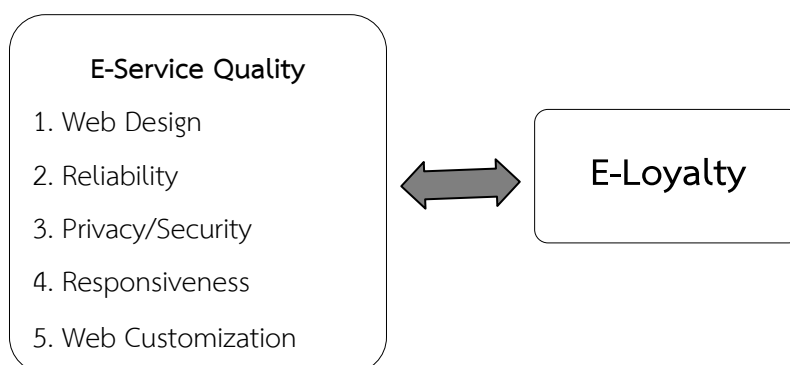
The conceptual framework drawn to analyze the result shows below:

From the conceptual framework presented, following hypothesis was set to analyze:

$H1_o$: There is no significant relationship between e-service quality in terms of web design, reliability, privacy/security, responsiveness, and web customization and e-loyalty of Thai travelers toward online travel service websites.

Methodology

The target population of this research were Thai consumers who ever used online travel service websites to reserve at least once, both male and female, age at least 20 years old. According to the laws of Thailand the child reaches the age of majority is 20 years old, which they can make their own decisions, terminating the control and legal responsibilities of their parents or guardian over them. In addition, Kadir and Faruk (2016) claims that the growing interest in youth tourism whose age are between 18 and 29 years is becoming increasingly important and it is also considered to be the most dynamic markets of the global tourism industry.

The instrument selected to collect the data from respondents is questionnaire. The questionnaire designed for this research was in 5 Likert scales measurement to rate the opinion toward e-service quality components and to level the e-loyalty toward online travel service websites, while nominal and ordinal scale questions were set to classify the demographic information of samples.

The sample size equal to at least 385 respondents which The Cochran's formula (1997) was used in this study to calculating sample size when especially appropriate in situations with large populations. This Cochran formula allows to calculate an ideal sample size given a desired level of precision, desired confidence level, and estimated proportion of the attribute present in the population (Shodhganga, 2013).

For data analysis, Frequency and Percentage were applied to present demographic data of samples, while Pearson correlation with significant value of .05 was applied to test the relationship between e-service quality components and e-loyalty of Thai travelers toward online travel service websites.

Result

Based on the analysis done by frequency/percentage and Pearson correlation on the data collected from 400 Thai travelers who ever used online travel service websites to reserve at least one time, it could be summarized in 2 below tables:

Table 1 Frequency/Percentage of demographic data

Demographic		Freq.	Perc.
Gender	Male	195	48.03
	Female	211	51.97
	Total	406	100
Age	20 – 30 years old	124	30.54
	31 – 40 years old	161	39.66
	41 – 50 years old	76	18.72
	51 years old and over	45	11.08
	Total	406	100
Number of times to use online travel service websites	1 – 3 times	88	21.67
	4 – 6 times	166	40.89
	7 – 10 times	111	27.34
	More than 10 times	41	10.10
	Total	406	100

Table 1 represents the demographic information of all 406 sample respondents: there were 51.97% females and 48.03% males. The majority group of respondents age between 31 and 40 years old which equal to 39.66% followed by 30.54% whose age between 20 and 30 years old. And, there were 40.89% and 27.34% who ever used online travel service websites approximate 4 - 6 times and 7 - 10 times respectively, while 10.1% ever used more than 10 times.

Table 2 Pearson correlation result of the relationship between e-service quality factors and e-loyalty

Factors	Pearson	E-loyalty	Ranking
Web customization	Cor.	.388	# 1
	Sig.	.000*	
Privacy/Security	Cor.	.373	# 2
	Sig.	.000	
Reliability	Cor.	.371	# 3
	Sig.	.000*	
Responsiveness	Cor.	.355	# 4
	Sig.	.000*	
Web design	Cor.	.286	# 5
	Sig.	.000*	

Table 2 indicates that all five given components of e-service quality were significantly related to e-loyalty of Thai travelers toward online travel service websites due to the significant value was below .05. As a result: $H1_o$: There is no significant relationship between e-service quality in terms of web design, reliability, web customization, privacy, and responsiveness and e-loyalty of Thai travelers toward online travel service websites is rejected.

In addition from the correlation value, all indicated that each e-service quality components has positive relationship with e-loyalty due to the value in the range (0.286, 0.388). The maximum value for the correlation was web customization = 0.388, followed by privacy/security = 0.373, reliability = 0.371, responsiveness = 0.355, and web design = 0.286. It represents that if the travelers view more positive toward e-quality service of online travel service websites, they would have high loyalty to use that website later.

This study showed a conceptual framework of e-service quality in five components to assess e-loyalty of Thai consumer toward online travel service website. The development of the framework model, the five components were studied and tested. The result showed in this study had an acceptable and presented the significantly relationship between e-service quality components respectively; web customization, privacy/security, reliability, responsiveness, and web design and e-loyalty.

Conclusion and Discussion

The Internet is defined as the worldwide interconnection of individual networks and it is a very powerful equipment that business can use to communicate with customer, which exactly affect to travel business. With online travel websites have activate the traveler with vibrant imagery, tourist information, special promotion, or tourist consultant. In the online marketing which many online travel websites, the business have to create strongly relationship with customer to make satisfaction, retention and loyalty. The e-service quality components have been consider in this paper to make a relationship with e-loyalty of customer who used online travel service websites.

The proposed of this paper is to analyze the relationship between e-service quality components and e-loyalty of Thai consumers toward online travel service websites. The questionnaire was use to collected the data from Thai consumers who used online travel service website. The Pearson correlation result data in table 2 shows that there were strong

relation between e-service quality components and e-loyalty toward online travel service websites, which presented the web customization has a highest relation and web design was less influenced. The data further shown that the relationship were in the positive direction due to the value gather than 0. In addition, the travelers viewed more positive toward e-service quality components, they tend to have high loyalty toward use those websites again and again.

Recommendation

This study presented the five components of e-service quality have the significant relationship with e-loyalty of Thai consumer toward online travel service websites which consists of web design, reliability, responsiveness, privacy/security, and web customization. The travel business have to be consider of each component to get more visitors' first impressions and continue to access their websites. Meanwhile, this study only focused on the relationship between e-service quality components and e-loyalty, in addition, future study needs to understand and analyze in individual component in more depth, which is direct or indirect influence to customer loyalty and satisfaction in the website. This includes adopting other theories that respond to the needs of customer more effective and it will create the service websites differentiation and match the customer demand.

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